

Visual Artist Andy Smetanka: Silhouette, animated film

Andy Smetanka works almost exclusively with silhouettes, both animating them and capturing them in still images. By shooting still images with a digital camera, he captures a broader range of subject material in a shorter time, sometimes making several images in a day. But Smetanka says he is also "addicted to the magic of creating movement with silhouettes." The artist sometimes devotes weeks or months in the studio to making short animated films with his Super 8 camera.

"I simply like the look of very old film... Not all accidents of processing and handling are happy ones, but apart from looking good and authentic in my movies, these small defects add a certain element of risk and chance to the process itself..."

Smetanka seems to value some of the unpredictability inherent in his craft. "As a filmmaker I am fully in control of the shooting and editing, but not of the outsourced stage that turns 'my' medium into the actual strip of finished film that carries the images." He also has no control over the process by which the plastic film is projected and re-recorded into digital video files, or the chance inherent to chemical processing itself, which he describes as "an alchemy of dashed hopes and bewildering surprises."

"By the time the footage comes back to me, six months might have elapsed since I first shot it.. In an era of instant filmmaking, perhaps the mere act of waiting for weeks with fingers crossed is innovative."

The panel interpreted Smetanka's work as completely innovative in content and form, all while being "low tech." They found his work samples beautiful and distilled, and felt it reflected his deep connection to the place he lives. They appreciated the way he's wedded to discarded technology, but in a very personal way, instead of a nostalgic way. Smetanka's work is highly professional, and reflects his knowledge of his influences and the history of his media.

